

THE KING AS WARRIOR IN SAMUEL-KINGS

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It is becoming increasingly complex to speak of the Deuteronomistic (Dtr) historians, the boundaries of their works, and the theological and historical issues of significance to them. Noth's assertion that the Dtr History was penned by a single historian using written sources is no longer widely accepted despite continued attempts to perceive a broad unity to the work.¹ The fracturing of the work's unity has multiplied the number of ancient Israelites who now bear the epithet Dtr with a distinguishing numeral (Dtr1, Dtr2) or letter (DtrH, DtrP, DtrN).² Large blocks of material within the history still lack a consensus as to origin: the narratives associated with David's rise to kingship, for example, are explained by a variety of source analyses.³ Even the context and date of the succession history is suspect, with some even affirming that it is both post-Dtr and antimonarchic (Van Seters 1983, pp. 277–291).

It is evident that considerable work remains to be done in identifying with confidence the varied trajectories of the Dtr work(s) (cf. Ackroyd, 1985, 301–305). The problem is further compounded by the numerous sources, whose content may (or may not) be related to the primary and changing interests of the Dtr historians. In a work of such broad scope encompassing diverse sociological, political and religious ideologies, identifying what is

1. McKenzie (1991) presents with sensitive nuancing the most recent apologetic for Noth's basic thesis with appropriate modifications.

2. See O'Brien's (1989, pp. 3–23) revised dissertation for a thorough survey of the alternatives that have been proposed.

3. For example, Halpern (1981, pp. 149–74) traces the A and B sources identified with Saul's rise up through 1 Sam 31 where the A source appears to end while B continues and embraces the history of the Davidic succession. Foresti (1984), unaware of Halpern's work, partitions the material he discusses quite differently and among three editors (DtrH, DtrP, DtrN). Peckham (1985, p. 38 fig. 5) sees a unity in 1 Sam 12–16, 19–2 Sam 10 under the hand of Dtr2, while Fretheim (1985) finds reworked materials fitting quite comfortably in their present context.

central and what is peripheral remains an unfinished task.⁴ Here my objective is to discuss an issue which may be helpful in illuminating aspects of the complex Dtr history: the literary depiction of the king's relationship to war and the transformations it undergoes in the Dtr history. By tracing these permutations, this study distinguishes the distinctive attitudes and underlying schools of thought that have been brought together in the Dtr history.

In the ancient Near East, kingship by definition was militant: the leader has a duty to oppose aggressively the threat of chaos.⁵ Consequently, it is not unusual to find that the king at war occupies a prominent position in the Dtr history. However, the subject of the king at war receives erratic treatment at the hand of the Dtr editor(s). The Dtr history contains, whether intentionally or because of the sources used, at least three⁶ major perspectives in the three periods it covers: those of Saul and David, Solomon, and the two monarchies. In the following discussion I will trace the treatment of the king at war in these periods. This analysis will show that although the presence of the kings of Israel and Judah in battle is generally inconsequential for the Dtr history, Saul and David are judged by their ability as warriors while Solomon is sympathetically depicted as one who does not fight.

Saul and David

The complexes customarily identified with the story of Saul's kingship, the story of David's rise, and the succession narrative uniformly reflect the king's leadership in war as a significant feature of kingship. Although the manner of leadership and the format for action vary, there is a resolute portrayal of the good king as warrior. This portrait is not a peripheral idiosyncrasy of the sources but reflects either a common perspective throughout the sources or substantial editing to link these narratives together.

1 Samuel 8:20 (generally attributed to Dtr activity) is the first occasion in the Saul and David narratives where kingship is endorsed as a function of war: "And we also shall be like all the nations, and our king shall judge us and shall go out before us and fight our battles." The voice of the people makes an explicit correlation between kingship and its justification as a military enterprise. The remainder of the books of Samuel pursues this thesis with particular vigor, for the general success of both Saul and David as kings is reflected in their performance on the battlefield.

4. The textual difficulty intensifies the problem; see J. Trebolle Barrera (1980).

5. Even a non-combatant like Akhenaton is held accountable by his Canaanite vassals as one who should be fighting on their behalf.

6. This is not to deny a spectrum of depictions which may lie behind the sources employed; see, for example, the fine-tuning in 2 Kings 3, 6-7 by Schweizer (1974).

Saul is portrayed as a worthy king according to the criterion of leadership in war. He takes it upon himself to rescue a beleaguered Israelite city. After dismembering two oxen, he declares, "He who fails to go out after Saul and after Samuel,⁷ so shall it be done to his ox" (1 Sam 11:7b). Israel is so impressed with Saul's performance that the nation confirms Saul in his position as king (1 Sam 11:12–15).⁸ Indeed, Yahweh himself had said that Saul was anointed a *nāgîd* as an aspect of his preparation for military service (1 Sam 9:16).⁹

Saul's record as Israel's military leader (1 Sam 13–15) is initially exemplary in spite of other failures. These failures are sufficient to deprive him of his privilege as king, for courage in battle is not the sole quality required of a king. Because Saul is found to be unfit for kingship, it comes as no surprise when he eventually fails as Israel's warrior among warriors. In 1 Samuel 17 the battle with Goliath is a stalemate because Saul refuses to fight.¹⁰ The giant is a formidable foe, but it is no accident that Israel's king is a giant among men as well: "From his shoulders and up he was taller than all the people" (1 Sam 9:2b; 10:23). The obvious choice for a champion to engage the Philistine giant is Israel's giant.¹¹ But the man who is obligated to fight Israel's wars now fears an opponent for the first time (v. 11). The contrast between the rejected king Saul and the future king David is resolved in this chapter: David, not Saul, is now fighting Israel's wars.

Both Saul and the people of Israel are aware of the significance of David's courage in battle, for the victory results in greater accolades for David: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam 18:7b).¹² By recording Saul's reaction, the narrator underscores

7. "And after Samuel" (omitted by one manuscript) are generally considered supplementary (Birch, 1976, p. 55).

8. Verse 14 suggests that Saul is already king (in line with 10:24), while v. 15 seems to imply that the kingship was bestowed only after Saul's magnificent performance against Ammon. Both perspectives support the thesis, for in either case the narrative explicitly connects kingship with Saul's military leadership.

9. If *nāgîd* is "military commander" (Cross, 1973, p. 220), then the connection is even more explicit. But see Mettinger (1976, pp. 151–84).

10. "The story of David and the Philistine has a clear and important function in the development of the larger narrative, for it demonstrates at the outset David's superiority to Saul as a war leader and 'savior' of Israel" (McCarter, 1980, pp. 295–96).

11. The bestowal of Saul's armor upon David is a striking event—David is asked to wear what Saul should be wearing (see Jobling, 1978, pp. 12,22).

12. The formulaic pair "thousand-ten thousand" (common in Ugaritic) need not imply that David is a better warrior than Saul; the "thousand" is not regarded as somehow derogatory or deficient in contrast to the "ten thousand." Freedman (1964) maintains that the victory paeon

Saul's awareness that David's superiority in combat makes David more qualified than Saul to be Israel's king:

Now this matter was offensive to Saul.¹³ And he thought, "They have ascribed ten thousand to David, but to me they have ascribed (only) thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?" From that day onward, Saul eyed David with suspicion. (1 Sam 18:8, 9)

Saul fails once again to take the reins of the military and assert his leadership. Indeed, the narrator prefers to emphasize that Saul hands over substantial leadership to David:

He [Saul] appointed him [David] as commander-of-a-thousand, and he [David] went out and returned before the army (*wayyēšē² wayyābo² lipnê hā^cām*). . . . All Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them (*kî hû² yôšē² wābā² lipnêhem*). (1 Sam 18:13b, 16)

In David's rise to power, these words are significant in so far as they echo the words of the Israelites when they originally asked for a king to lead them in battle: "And he shall go out before us (*wēyāšā² lēpānênû*)" (1 Sam 8:20b).

The narrator expends considerable effort to emphasize that David is Israel's best warrior. Not only does David repeatedly wreak havoc among Israel's enemies (1 Sam 18:25–30; 19:8; 23:1–5; 27:8–11), but the writer specifies that "as often as they went out to battle, David was more successful than all of Saul's servants, and his reputation was highly esteemed" (1 Sam 18:30). David fights battles which Saul should fight in liberating Israelite cities (1 Sam 23:5), an echo of Saul's earlier career (1 Sam 11). Between the episode with the Philistine giant and Saul's final battle, the narrative portrays Saul fighting Israel's enemies only once. The narrator plays down that isolated occurrence, mentioning it simply to account for the lifting of the siege against David (1 Sam 23:28; cf. 24:1). Saul goes to war not against Israel's enemies but against Israel's savior (1 Sam 23:8).¹⁴

would still be offensive to Saul inasmuch as it makes David at least his equal: "This is the only example of standard number-parallelism, among all those cited by the author, in which there is a distinction of subjects: Saul and David." While originally Saul and David were praised equally in this archaic couplet, in the present context the people most likely—and Saul certainly—are depicted as understanding that David is a superior warrior. "It is inconceivable that the women could have dared to sing to Saul a verse which puts him in second place" (Hertzberg, 1964, p. 157), yet our text at present understands it so.

13. Two ancient variants have been conflated: *wayyihar lēšā²ūl mē²od al haddābār hazzeh* and *wayyēra^c bē^cenê šā²ūl haddābār hazzeh* (cf. LXX^B).

14. More tragically, Saul turns the sword away from Israel's enemies and directs it against a priestly community in Nob: "Saul does against the Israelites what he did not do, but certainly should have, against the Amalekites" (Miscall, 1986, p. 136).

In the account of Saul's last battle the reader is prepared for the pitiful remnant of a soldier that Israel's king has become: "And Saul saw the Philistine camp and feared and his heart trembled greatly" (1 Sam 28:5). This is not a king. In dramatic contrast, David once again successfully assumes the task of defending Israel from enemies (1 Sam 30).

The motif of the king as the military leader seems to be a significant theme in 1 Samuel for either enhancing or undermining Saul's and David's credentials for kingship. The picture changes little in 2 Samuel, for as that book opens David appears as a paradigm of the king whom Israelites desired to fight their wars. Jebusites (5:6–10), Philistines (5:17–25; 8:1), Moabites (8:2), and Arameans (8:3–8; 10:13) make an impressive list of David's personal conquests.

The only pitched battle with Israel's enemies in which David takes no part is with the Ammonites (10:1–14). David's failure to respond personally in battle is noteworthy, for it breaks a pattern. Noteworthy as well is the fact that with David's absence, Joab does not inflict a decisive defeat: the Syrians again regroup (10:15, 16), and the Ammonites remain rebellious throughout chapters 11 and 12. The stalemate without the king means another battle must be fought. When this time David personally leads the army of Israel, victory is complete (10:17–19).

What motivated David to stay behind and to dispatch Joab at the head of the army? In the narrative flow of the books of Samuel traced thus far, the reader has learned to expect a crisis for such a negligent king. Indeed, the very next verse confirms our understanding of this motif. David's negligence in the Ammonite war prepares the reader for the following plot development:

And it happened at the turn of the year, the time when kings¹⁵ go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. Now David stayed in Jerusalem. (2 Sam 11:1)

Just as with the Ammonite adventure in chapter 10, so here there is a stalemate with Ammon while Israel's king fails to perform a duty uniquely his: leading Israel to battle. The narrator's exploitation of this theme is explicit as he notes that David is not doing what other kings are doing.¹⁶ But Israel wanted a king like other kings. Uriah rebukes David for suggesting that a common soldier may relax at home while the army fights—a not-so-subtle hint that the king is shirking his even greater responsibility as king:

15. Like David's victory over the giant while Saul is king, so here Joab (although not completely successful) does overcome the enemy when the irresponsible king ignores his duty. Could Joab qualify as royal material? See Ishida (1982, pp. 181–85; 1977, pp. 171–82).

The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink and to lie with my wife? By your very life, I will not do this thing. (2 Sam 11:11)

As with Saul, tragedy confronts David precisely at the time when he relinquishes his duty as Israel's warrior. David's adultery and murderous plot result from the king's idleness, a point which the narration underscores by juxtaposing the events of verses 1 and 2 in chapter 11. The conclusion of the battle episode is predictable: the siege of Rabbah is brought to a victorious climax only when David is present with his armies (2 Sam 12:29–31). David's disregard for the obligations accompanying royalty is contrasted to Joab's greater sensitivity, as he gently reminds David to act like a king:

I have fought against Rabbah. I have even captured the city of waters. And now, gather the rest of the army and camp against the city and capture it, lest I take the city and it be given my name. (2 Sam 12:27b–28)

Joab's deference to the king seems designed to prevent a replay of 1 Samuel 18 where David's fame in battle eclipsed that of King Saul who stayed home. 2 Samuel has only two more extended battle accounts (ch. 18 and 20). The narration never deviates from the consistent theme in 1 and 2 Samuel, that the king's performance in battle is a reliable gauge of his success as king. In ch. 18 preparations are being made for the battle between David's and Absalom's forces. The king is in charge, and consequently the reader has hope for David. The king even enunciates his intention: "I, even I, shall surely go out with you!" (v. 2b).¹⁷ For the reader, this resolution is reassuring, since David is behaving like the king Israel requested. But any satisfaction is short-circuited by a startling request from the people:

And the people said, "You shall not go out. For if we indeed flee, they will pay no attention to us, and if half of us die, they will pay no attention to us. For you are like ten thousand of us. And now it is best that you be our warrior based in the city." (2 Sam 18:3)¹⁸

16. Campaigns began in spring and were suspended during the inclement part of the year. The *ketiv* "messengers" arose from later orthographical habits where *aleph* was employed as a medial *mater lectionis* for an "a" vowel as in the MT of Neh. 13:16 along with Isa. 1:17, 23; 13:7; 30:31; 35:6; 46:19; etc. in IQIsa (see Kutscher 1974, pp. 160–162). The MT of 2 Samuel in these chapters is unusually marked by unnecessary medial *alephs*; cf. 11:24, 24 12:1, 4.

17. Some unnecessarily see vv. 2b–4a as a secondary addition; see Conroy (1978, p. 44).

18. I am assuming the root **gʒr*, not **ḡdr*, for the final word in Hebrew. Vocalization as a *qatil* is perhaps suggested by the *ketiv* and Amorite proper names, but the *qātil* is suggested by its occurrence as a participle elsewhere (e.g., 1 Chr 12:1; Ezek 32:31). The MT also presents evidence for other nominal forms (Ezk 12:14; Ps 89:20). For discussion, see Miller (1970).

Is this the same Israel that desired a king like other nations, one who would lead them into battle? Nothing in the narrative prepares the reader for this about-face. Even ancient Near Eastern royal protocol was not so protective of its king that he was required to stay in a sheltering cocoon far from battle. Death to the monarch in battle was a very real hazard. The people's demand is entirely aberrant,¹⁹ and it becomes evident that the narrator is not sympathetic with the people's fickleness.

Four elements suggest that the narrator would have preferred to see David lead his army. First, the king's reply lacks any regality whatsoever: "Whatever seems good in your eyes, I will do" (2 Sam 18:4a). If v. 3 seems to exalt kingship to a level rarely reached in the ancient Near East, v. 4 plummets the king into the midst of a democracy. The contrast is too stark; with it the narrator achieves an emasculation of the king who refuses to shoulder the duty of his position in leading the army. The more normal response is for the people to do what is right in the king's eyes (1 Sam 14:36, 40; 2 Sam 19:26 [27], 37 [38]; contrast Jud 17:6; 21:25; cf. 18:1; 19:1).

Second, in 17:21–18:9 the narrator calls the king "David" seven times and "King David" once. However, in vv. 2b–5, where the plot centers upon David's decision to remain behind, he is called "king" five times, never simply "David." Here his kingship is the issue.²⁰ Unfortunately, he is a tragic king, as the middle reference of the five poignantly displays: "So the king (*hammelek*) stood (*wayya^cāmod*) beside the gate, but all the army (*kol hā^cām*) went out (*yāšē^u*) by hundreds and thousands" (18:4b). It is a sad and "vivid picture . . . which contrasts rest (*md*) with movement (*yš^u*), and the lone king with the many soldiers" (Conroy, 1978, p. 58).

Third, the people evaluate David's importance as if he were ten thousand Israelites. Because of the thrice repeated refrain in 1 Samuel—"David has slain his ten thousand"—the people's words are simply echoing a familiar perspective. But David's value as ten thousand warriors is precisely what the people insanely wish to withdraw. Illogically, Israel benches their most important player because he is the most valuable.

Finally, as the army moves out, David has one more item of business to conclude as a direct result of his decision to remain behind. He appeals to

19. A prohibition expressed by subordinates to their superior is shocking. 2 Sam 18:3 and 21:17 (possibly Jud 19:24, although the text is uncertain) are the only cases where the *lo^u* prohibitive is used in the Hebrew Bible by a subordinate to his superior (Bright, 1973, pp. 197–198).

20. The narration seems to employ such a contrast elsewhere; see Fokkelman's note on 2 Sam. 15:5 (1981, pp. 195–196).

the three generals to spare Absalom. But it is precisely David's absence from the battle that gives Joab the opportunity to slay Absalom,²¹ an act which essentially means that the battle was a failure.

And the victory in that day was turned to mourning for all the people, for the people heard in that day, saying, "The king is grieved about his son." And the people stole into the city just as a people steals in humiliated in their retreat from battle. (2 Sam 19:3, 4)

Once again, when the king refrains from battle, tragedy results. The pattern found elsewhere in Samuel repeats itself with persistent clarity.²²

The final battle in 2 Samuel is little different. A rebellion by Sheba rocks the kingdom. The rebellion is successfully put down in spite of David's absence, but ironically it is not the army that brings defeat. Sheba suffers the same despicable fate which Abimelech dreaded—death at the hands of a woman (2 Sam 20:16–22; cf. Jud 9:53, 54). But David's absence from the army encourages insurrection resulting in the death of David's highest-ranking general, slain by his rival Joab. The army is temporarily paralyzed (2 Sam 20:12). Another victory is tainted when the king does not lead his army.

Strikingly, the last three battles have more in common than David's failure to fulfill his role as his kingdom's warrior. In all three a treacherous murder occurs as a result of David's absence (Uriah, Absalom, Amasa). The murderer in each case is the same person: Joab, the leader of the armies in David's absence.

There is no need to detail the final miscellaneous collection of four chapters in 2 Samuel where the traditions gathered from various sources

21. It is noteworthy that the first comment on Absalom's bid for the throne identifies him with the royal warrior in acquiring a chariot and horses (2 Sam 15:1).

22. The defeat of Absalom has at least two ambiguities. 1) David's forces were indeed victorious in spite of his absence. But the narrative interprets the victory as a defeat not only because Absalom is slain but also because Israel fighting Israel is tragic. It is a senseless battle where a forest is more destructive than the armies themselves (2 Sam 18:8). 2) King Absalom leads his army but is defeated by King David who stays behind. However, as far as the narration is concerned, "King Absalom" may be a misnomer. The royal motifs do not apply to one who unsuccessfully tries to become king by regicide. Some of the references to Absalom as king function as double entendre (2 Sam 15:19; 16:16). Ahitophel unusually refers to David as "the king" in Absalom's presence (2 Sam 17:2). Absalom's anointing as king is not described although it is referred to prospectively (2 Sam 15:10) and retrospectively (2 Sam 19:10). David refers to Absalom as king for the purpose of flattery (2 Sam 15:34). *Bêt hammelek* (2 Sam 15:35) is better translated as "palace" and need not be a direct reference to Absalom's legitimacy as king. One has the feeling that the narrator is reticent to describe Absalom as "king" unless there is good reason to do so. Obviously, his sympathies lie with David, who is repeatedly referred to as "king."

testify to David's role as a warrior among warriors.²³ Looking back over the two books of Samuel, we have seen a consistent plot development and narration, which began with the people's request for a king like those of other nations, a king who would lead in battle. This theme persistently reflects the changing character and fortunes of two kings in Israel.²⁴

Solomon

A new development seems to occur after the book of Samuel. David's successor is emphatically not a warrior-king, and the narrative takes sufficient pains to minimize any hints of military activity on Solomon's part. This is particularly crucial, for the text contains sufficient evidence that Solomon's reign was not entirely smooth sailing. Yet the rough waves are calmed by the redactors in order to show that Solomon's reign was peaceful. For example, Adonijah and the army commander Joab are depicted as making a bid for the throne against Solomon (1 Kgs 2:13–35; cf. 1:5–53). The Egyptian military action against hostile Canaanite Gezer is suggestive of unrest among former tributaries to David (1 Kgs 9:16). Solomon's preparations for war proceed at a rate unprecedented in the records of Saul and David (1 Kgs 4:26; 9:15–22; 10:26–29). 1 Kings 11:14–22 records how Hadad of Edom began to cause Solomon trouble immediately upon David's death. Damascus also was a source of conflict throughout Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 11:23–25).

All of the above developments are hardly surprising after a new ruler accedes to the throne. Yet the text does not say how political unrest was handled beyond mentioning Solomon's use of death squads (1 Kgs 2:25, 29–34, 46; 11:40). Certainly there was some military action, yet the narrative insists that Solomon is not a man of war. "I do not know how to go out (*šēʔt*) or come in (*boʔ*)" (1 Kgs 3:7)²⁵ contrasts with the same idiom used in Samuel to prove David's right to kingship.

23. The final four chapters lack a coherent point of view; the individual traditions speak for themselves. See 21:22; 22:30, 35, 38–43; 23:7(?), 13–17; and 24:2–4. 2 Sam 21:15–17 echoes 2 Sam 18:3.

24. I have limited the discussion to positive evidence of military engagements between Israelites and their foes. The negative evidence is also suggestive. For example, "He [Ish-bosheth] never appeared in the only place where according to the original concept the soldier-king of Israel could display the nature and value of his office: in the camp of the Israelite tribes and at their head in battle" (Alt, 1968, p. 263).

25. This phrase is often understood as meaning the "round of daily public life." Defenders of this notion usually make reference back to Deut 28:6, but if one continues reading in v. 7 it is clear that a military significance is most obvious. See Hauer (1980).

He [Saul] appointed him as his commander-of-a-thousand; and he went out (*wayyēšēʔ*) and came in (*wayyāboʔ*) before the army. (1 Sam 18:13)

Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out (*môsiʔ*) and in (*mēbiʔ*). And the Lord said to you, "You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler (*nāgîd*) over Israel." (2 Sam 5:2)

Yet 1 Kings 4:21 pictures unceasing tribute coming from the farthest reaches of the empire, an empire repeatedly said to be "firmly established" (1 Kgs 2:12, 46) and without "adversary or misfortune" (1 Kgs 5:4; but cf. 11:14–25). Since Solomon fought no wars, he is able to build the temple (1 Kgs 5:3–5).

Therefore, the role of the royal warrior, played by Saul and David, is emphatically negated in the description of the reign of Israel's third king. Where there are hints of conflict, the orchestration of the sources camouflages any direct role which Solomon may have had. A different ideology underlies the presentation of Solomon as a commendable king because he did not go to war. It is a dramatic reversal of David and Saul's kingship which was depicted as contingent upon their ability in battle.

The Two Monarchies

The two books of Kings underscore the central traits which distinguish good kings from bad in the period of the two monarchies (e.g., allegiance to Yahweh, submission to the prophetic word, removal of the high places). However, the king's ability as a warrior is not among them. On the contrary, the notion of the king as warrior seems to have decidedly negative overtones.

Too often there is disaster where a warrior-king (good or bad) is mentioned. One immediately recalls the most faithful king, Josiah, who falls at Megiddo before Pharaoh's army (2 Kgs 23:29–30). The brief account of his death in battle is surprisingly reminiscent of the wicked Ahab (1 Kgs 22:34–37): the most wicked and the most faithful meet a similar fate. The death of Josiah does not stand alone as an isolated shocking incident requiring detailed explanation. In the Dtr history, Josiah's death is simply one among many events that make it clear that kings after Solomon do not always have confidence in the outcome of battle. Indeed, the successful encounters are those in which the king does not lead and in which God performs a miracle (1 Kgs 20:13–21; 2 Kgs 6:15–23; 7:6–7; 18:35–37).

For example, Jehoshaphat forms a questionable pact with Ahab in a war where Yahweh promises defeat, and Ahab is slain (1 Kgs 22:2–36). In like manner, Ahaziah and Joram join forces against Syria, where the king of

Israel is wounded and forced from battle (2 Kgs 8:28, 29; 9:14, 15). An unnamed king of Judah now identified with Jehoshaphat (Shenkel, 1968, pp. 93–108) joins with the kings of Edom and Israel in an attempt to quell a Moabite rebellion, but in spite of victories the conclusion of the affair brings “great wrath on Israel” (2 Kgs 3:4–27).²⁶ King Nadab of Israel is at the front with his troops fighting Philistines when Baasha murders him (1 Kgs 15:27). Rehoboam valiantly musters 180,000 soldiers to regain the northern kingdom, but a prophet orders him to disband the troops because the division of the kingdom is ordained by God (1 Kgs 12:21–24). Joram of Judah attempts to personally quell an Edomite uprising, but although he extricates himself from a trap the campaign is a failure (2 Kgs 8:20–22). A series of kings (both good and bad according to the Dtr formulary) uses the temple treasury or taxes to purchase peace rather than lead their armies to war: Asa (1 Kgs 15:17–22), Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:17–18), Menahem (2 Kgs 15:19–20), Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:5–9), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13–16). The ultimate reversal is in the final battle, where Zedekiah takes the army and sneaks away, leaving Jerusalem defenseless (2 Kgs 25:4–6).

These examples make clear that a new concern pervades the narratives of the later kings in contrast to the narratives of Saul and David. The king in the book of Kings is decidedly not the royal warrior depicted in 1 and 2 Samuel. With great rarity, a faint echo of Saul and David may appear, such as Hezekiah’s rebellion against Assyria and conquest of the Philistines in 2 Kings 18:7,8.²⁷ But this is exceptional and minor in the Dtr history, serving only to intensify the reader’s awareness of the radical shift of emphasis from Samuel to Kings. The king’s performance in battle is no longer a correlate of his stature as king.

Conclusion

Discussions of war in the Hebrew Bible have centered upon contrasts such as those between the divine and the human element in war, between the Yahweh war and its secular counterpart, between wars of conquest and defensive wars (Lind, 1980; Kang 1989). The preceding discussion has clarified a further contrast which arises from within the Dtr history itself, namely the role of the king himself in battle.

While I have been concerned here with kingship in the books of Samuel and Kings, further study may find similarities in the treatment of the war-leaders

26. For the ambiguities in this phrase, see Cogan and Tadmor (1988, pp. 47–48, 51–52).

27. In the light of Provan’s demonstration of a Hezekian edition (1988), the reappearance of the warrior-king in the person of Hezekiah deserves further attention.

in Joshua and Judges. I have found evidence that the issue of the king and war is of importance in that it is sustained over large blocks of material. At the same time, the subject receives distinctly varied treatment in discrete sections of the Dtr history. In the case of the books of Samuel, a consistent concern to present the king as a warrior contrasts with the kings of the two monarchies, who are not presented in this fashion. It is not simply that the subject is omitted in this latter case, for the king at war continues to dominate the narrative. However, where a correlation exists between the king's ability as a warrior and his capability as king in the books of Samuel, this correlation ceases entirely for the kings of Judah and Israel.

Even though the correlation disappears in the book of Kings, the subject of the king and his relationship to war continues as a concern of the Dtr history, but with a new emphasis. This concern is suggested in the case of Solomon, where the narratives betray a mixed perspective on Solomon's relationship to war: in spite of evidence in the text of formidable military activity requiring Solomon's attention, considerable effort has been expended to distance Solomon from it.

Secondly, although the post-Solomonic kings are often portrayed at war, the lack of a correlation between military prowess and successful kingship is unlikely to have originated with the royal memorials of the state archives. If the royal military records of Israel's neighbors are any reflection of what Israel's kings imitated, the glorification of the king in battle would receive disproportionate attention at the expense of his failures. Despite the annalistic echoes in much of the material, the treatment of the king at war in the book of Kings would not originate from such a royal perspective. If one assumes that the editors of the Dtr history (or the sources which they employed) had access to royal archival material where presumably the kings preserved their military exploits, the omission of this material and the denial in Kings of the theme so prominent in Samuel suggests a deliberate alternative to the notions of kingship and war. It would be premature to try to attribute this latter perspective to the slippery figures presently associated with the various levels of the Dtr history,²⁸ but this element may assist in ultimately making these figures less elusive.

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28. Cf. Rose's (1976) conception of the Yahwist.

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Of Kings and Prophets is just one of many bible stories to be turned into a television adaption following the rise of period dramas. In 2013, Roma Downey and Mark Burnett produced the Emmy nominated television miniseries The Bible which aired on History and Channel 5 in the UK. The show was then turned into a feature film, titled Son of God, released in cinemas in winter 2014.Â Troubled: Of Kings and Prophets is focused on the Book of Samuel and centres around the story of Saul and his successor David. The BBC also took inspiration from Genesis for their 2015 televised film, The Ark, starring David Threlfall and Joanne Whalley. The Warrior Kings. Become a Fan Remove Fan. Rock / Blues / Instrumental Indianapolis, IN. The Warrior Kings. Rock / Blues / Instrumental Indianapolis, IN more. Become a Fan Remove Fan. The Warrior Kings. Become a Fan Remove Fan. Rock / Blues / Instrumental Indianapolis, IN. {{tab | capitalize}}. Save Remove from Library. â€“ 1 Samuel 17. 1010 BC. King Saul fires David from his court but makes him a commander in his army. â€“ 1 Samuel 18:13. David is successful as a warrior in Saulâ€™s army that the king offers his daughter in marriage to David. â€“ 1 Samuel 18:21. Jonathan, a son of King Saul, and David become the best friends and make an oath to one another regarding future generations. â€“ 1 Samuel 20.